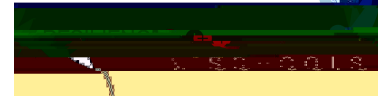


Talkin

When Violence Happens



offers guidance for adults to help them talk with teens.


Teens react differently than adults. It makes sense that people in different stages of life will experience this differently. This resource and injury, there can be a range of intense reactions including horror, shock, anger, fear, loss and grief. Teens might react differently. Before talking with your teen, check in with yourself (How am I feeling? What do I need? What if you are calm and When experiencing or violent events happen in the world, teens look to their peers and the adults around them to help

FIRST CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

grounded during the conversation. Just as teens have feelings about these experiences, so do adults. You might feel scared, worried, overwhelmed, angry, helpless, sad, distracted, scared, or numb. These feelings in adults are completely normal following a violent event. Consider how any single event may call up old feelings of grief and may intersect with stress and trauma related to one's identity (gender, race, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ status) or previous experience. In addition, this event may be layered on top of other current stressors in your work or

 A helpful first step may be to acknowledge the feelings you are having.

The simple act of labeling emotions promotes a sense of calm. It shifts brain activity from the alarm centers of the brain to the parts of our brain that support coping and problem solving. You can also take a few deep breaths, a short walk, talk to a friend, or do anything that helps you feel calm or more grounded. This will help relate you to talk with your teen in a way that communicates safety and openness to talking about their feelings, experience and needs. Checking in with yourself first will also help you to be ready to address any questions they might have. It's okay not to have all the answers.

 Your warm, open presence is the most important thing.

CLARIFY YOUR GOAL

As you approach the conversation, it can be helpful to start with a goal in mind. An overall goal is to create a safe space for teens to share their feelings, questions, reactions, and perspectives about what has happened. You might ask yourself, "How much I learn more about their perspectives, experiences? How much I help them feel empowered in ways that are important to them (e.g. service, activism, school/community involvement)? How much I show I am open and ready to listen? Some simple goals are to be present, listen, be open, show interest, and clarify information.

 Keep coming back to messages of support and willingness to keep talking.

PROVIDE INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

Share simple facts and information about what has happened and balance it with information about resources. Match the type and amount of information to the developmental level of the teen. Address questions about what they have already heard and correct any misinformation. If a teen asks about help or take action, share information about organizations in their community. Be simple and clear. Short conversations are more powerful than a single long conversation.

 Remember to share clear information including things your teen might be able to do in response to the event and keep checking in.

